

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY REPORT ON PATENTABILITY

(Chapter II of the Patent Cooperation Treaty)

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 42160WOP00	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> FOR FURTHER ACTION See Form PCT/IPEA/416 </div>	
International application No. PCT/AU2005/000368	International filing date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 16 March 2005	Priority date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 20 April 2004
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC Int. Cl. A63F 13/00 (2006.01)		
Applicant AINSWORTH GAME TECHNOLOGY LIMITED et al		

This report is the international preliminary examination report, established by this International Preliminary Examining Authority under Article 35 and transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of **4** sheets, including this cover sheet.

3. This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, comprising:

a. ☒ (*sent to the applicant and to the International Bureau*) a total of **13** sheets, as follows:

☐ sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications authorized by this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions).

☐ sheets which supersede earlier sheets, but which this Authority considers contain an amendment that goes beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed, as indicated in item 4 of Box No. I and the Supplemental Box.

b. ☐ (*sent to the International Bureau only*) a total of (indicate type and number of electronic carrier(s)) , containing a sequence listing and/or table related thereto, in electronic form only, as indicated in the Supplemental Box Relating to Sequence Listing (see Section 802 of the Administrative Instructions).

4. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- ☒ Box No. I Basis of the report
- ☐ Box No. II Priority
- ☐ Box No. III Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
- ☐ Box No. IV Lack of unity of invention
- ☒ Box No. V Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- ☐ Box No. VI Certain documents cited
- ☐ Box No. VII Certain defects in the international application
- ☐ Box No. VIII Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 17 February 2006	Date of completion of this report 23 March 2006
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA E-mail address: pct@ipaustalia.gov.au Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929	Authorized Officer DALE SIVER Telephone No. (02) 6283 2196

Box No. I Basis of the report**1. With regard to the language, this report is based on:**

- ☒ The international application in the language in which it was filed
- ☐ A translation of the international application into _____, which is the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of:
- ☐ international search (under Rules 12.3(a) and 23.1 (b))
- ☐ publication of the international application (under Rule 12.4(a))
- ☐ international preliminary examination (Rules 55.2(a) and/or 55.3(a))

2. With regard to the elements of the international application, this report is based on (replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report):

- ☐ the international application as originally filed/furnished
- ☒ the description:
- pages as originally filed/furnished
- pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of
- pages* 1-7 received by this Authority on 12 March 2006 with the letter of 21 March 2006
- ☒ the claims:
- pages as originally filed/furnished
- pages* as amended (together with any statement) under Article 19
- pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of
- pages* 8-13 received by this Authority on 12 March 2006 with the letter of 21 March 2006
- ☒ the drawings:
- pages 1,2 as originally filed/furnished
- pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of
- pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of

☐ a sequence listing and/or any related table(s) - see Supplemental Box Relating to Sequence Listing.

3. ☒ The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- ☒ the original description, page 8
- ☐ the claims, Nos.
- ☐ the drawings, sheets/figs
- ☐ the sequence listing (specify):
- ☐ any table(s) related to the sequence listing (specify):

4. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments annexed to this report and listed below had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).

- ☐ the description, pages
- ☐ the claims, Nos.
- ☐ the drawings, sheets/figs
- ☐ the sequence listing (specify):
- ☐ any table(s) related to the sequence listing (specify):

* If item 4 applies, some or all of those sheets may be marked "superseded."

Box No. V Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Claims 1-54	YES
	Claims	NO
Inventive step (IS)	Claims 1-54	YES
	Claims	NO
Industrial applicability (IA)	Claims 1-54	YES
	Claims	NO

2. Citations and explanations (Rule 70.7)

- D1 CA 2440945 A1 (ACRES GAMING INCORPORATED) 16 March 2004
D2 WO 2001/012281 A1 (ARISTOCRAT TECHNOLOGIES AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD.) 22 February 2001
D3 WO 2002/032523 A1 (CASINO DATA SYSTEMS) 25 April 2002
D4 WO 1999/010849 A1 (ARISTOCRAT-LEISURE-INDUSTRIES-PTY. LTD.)
D5 AU 2003234879 A1 (AINSWORTH GAME TECHNOLOGY LIMITED)
D6 US 2004/0043815 A1 (KAMINKOW) 4 March 2004
D7 US 2003/0083123A1 (AINSWORTH GAME TECHNOLOGY LIMITED)
D8 US 2002/0165019 A1 (SLOMIANY) 7 November 2002
D9 US 2002/0151349 A1 (JOSHI) 17 October 2002

Novelty (N)

D1 discloses a gaming system where the feature (or bonus or secondary) game is triggered by accumulated winnings (or when other compiled outcomes match the triggering condition). D2 discloses a gaming machine specifically designed to play two games. The player can control whether the secondary (or feature) game is started at any time of their choosing. D3 discloses a method and device for gaming, including a primary game and one or more bonus games. The bonus games are triggered by the outcomes on the primary game. The player can control whether they qualify for a bonus game by winning (eg. in the first bonus game) or by wagering (eg. in further bonus games). D4 discloses a gaming machine that is arranged to simultaneously play two games. One embodiment includes that the auxiliary (background) game is started by the player in the same way that the main (foreground) game is started.

None of the citations explicitly disclose the features of the amended claims; in particular they do not disclose the ability to accumulate predetermined feature qualifying attributes which opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open.

Supplemental Box

In case the space in any of the preceding boxes is not sufficient.

Continuation of Box V

Inventive step (IS)

The Gaming Machine of D5 includes a base game and a feature game where the feature game will operate at the end of every operation of the base game. D5 does not disclose the feature of the amended claims where the "feature game" can be triggered at any time during a specified time period defining a window of opportunity. Given the disclosure of D4 it would be obvious to a person of ordinary skill that for certain "feature" games (like KENO or BINGO) the window of opportunity is the specified time period associated with that type of game. However the amended claim defines that the window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes. It is acknowledged that this would not be obvious in light of the combination of D4 and D5.

D6, D7, D8 and D9 all disclose a base game and a feature game where the triggers for starting a feature game are associated directly with player activity in the base game or indirectly with activities of other (linked) players. None of the citations alone or in combination disclose the gaming machine defined in (amended) claim 1. Similar comments apply to claim 28.

Claims 2 to 27 or 29 to 54 are appended directly (or through other claims) to claim 1 or 28. Hence all the claims include the limitations that are acknowledged as satisfying PCT requirements for inventive step.

Industrial applicability (IA)

The industrial application is an improved gaming machine

- 1 -

TITLE: GAMING MACHINE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to gaming machines. The invention has been developed primarily in relation to computerised gaming machines and will be described herein with reference to that application. However, it should be understood that the invention is not limited to that particular field of use and may be suitable for other applications, such as gaming facilitated by the internet.

10 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Any discussion of the prior art throughout the specification should in no way be considered as an admission that such prior art is widely known or forms part of common general knowledge in the field.

Gaming machines have long been known and are now one of the most common forms of gambling. Usually gaming machines simulate a well-known game of chance. One of the oldest and best known forms of gaming machine is the rotating reel type "poker machine". In light of its popularity, the present invention will be described with reference to this type of gaming machine. However, it will be appreciated that the invention is equally applicable to gaming machines other than the rotating reel type.

Traditional poker machines use a series of three or more reels, each reel having symbols on its peripheral edge. The reels are rotated upon the placement of a bet and then stopped to produce an arrangement of randomly selected symbols. Winnings are paid if the random selection of symbols matches one of the predetermined winning combinations. More recently, these gaming machines have been computerised with a video screen replacing the physically rotating reels. The display screen typically presents an array of symbols and five columns and three rows equating to the symbols that would normally be seen on the five physically rotating reels of an old-style mechanical machine.

Gaming machines can "pay winnings" in a variety of ways. These include dispensing money, dispensing tokens that can be redeemed for money, or simply

- 2 -

adding credits to a credit meter that can be used for placing future bets or redeemed as money. Given the predominance of computerised gaming machines, winnings are most commonly paid in the form of credits tallied on a credit meter. However, those skilled in the art will readily understand that the term encompasses other payment
5 mechanisms.

Computerised machines have allowed players to simultaneously bet on the combination of symbols appearing in many different parts of the array. These parts of the array are referred to as "paylines" and consist of lines of adjacent symbols extending through the array. The symbols may be laterally or diagonally adjacent
10 each other so that the paylines can extend along each row and various angled or "zigzag" lines through the array. Most computerised gaming machines will offer at least five paylines in a five-reel array, which makes the gaming experience significantly more exciting than the old-style mechanical machines which traditionally had a single payline through the middle row of symbols.

15 Eventually, machines offered all the practical paylines in the five-column three-row array. Players come to expect machines to offer multiple paylines and game designers were forced to incorporate additional aspects of interest in order to attract players.

As part of this ongoing effort to maintain player interest, many machines now
20 offer secondary or "feature" games. The feature appears upon some trigger event such as predetermined outcome in a primary or "base" game. The feature can be used to provide the player with relatively large winnings and thereby provides a strong incentive to continue playing the machine. As various different types of feature have been devised, several have proven to be particularly effective and popular. Different
25 versions are incorporated into many of the machines available today.

One disadvantage associated with gaming machines which include feature games, is that the opportunity for triggering a feature game usually ends once the next primary game is played. Hence if the player does not choose to play the feature game at that time, the opportunity to play the feature game is lost.

- 3 -

It is an object of the present invention to overcome or ameliorate at least one of the disadvantages of the prior art, or to provide a useful alternative.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided a gaming machine including:

 a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any of said winning outcomes;

10 said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

 said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said
15 one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

 According to a second aspect of the invention there is provided a method of operating a gaming machine, the method including the steps of:

 providing a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the
20 occurrence of any of said winning outcomes;

 said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

25 said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

 Preferably, different types of feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

- 4 -

The feature qualifying attributes are preferably accumulated at random, in the event of the base game being played a predetermined number of times or during play of the base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

In a preferred form of the invention, feature attributes may be removed from a player's tally once they have been used to trigger the feature game. Removal of the attributes may also occur at random, on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during play of the base game or in the event of the base game being played a predetermined number of times.

Preferably, the characteristics of the feature game are dependent on the accumulation of specific feature qualifying attributes which may result in the feature game including free games, win multipliers, substitutes symbols, bonus prizes, held reels, bonus reels, bonus scatter symbols, bonus substitute symbols and bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.

Varying levels of windows of opportunity are preferably provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.

In one embodiment, the feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes and the gaming machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of a predetermined number of jackpot qualifying attributes.

Preferably, when a player triggers the jackpot feature game, player interaction is required to win the jackpot. More preferably, when a player triggers the jackpot feature game, a secondary jackpot screen will appear for facilitating the player interaction.

Preferably, the jackpot is contributed from a stand-alone machine or from a number of machines networked together.

In a particularly preferred form, the base game is a spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.

- 5 -

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a stand-alone gaming machine of the type
5 suitable for the present invention; and

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of the gaming machine display showing a variety of arrays and paylines.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

10 Referring to Figure 1, the gaming machine 1 has a video display screen 2 and control console 3. The control console 3 includes a coin slot 5 for inserting coins or tokens, a bank note slot 19, and a coin collection tray 6 for redeeming any winnings or unused coins or tokens. The console 3 also includes control buttons 4 for the player to select the number of paylines on which to bet, and, the number of credits they wish to
15 bet on each payline.

The base game is a standard set of five reels, which present a five-column three-row array 7 of randomly selected symbols. The array 7 has seven paylines, 1-1 to 7-7 on which the player can place a bet. The payline icons 8 are placed on either side of the array 7 to more clearly indicate the configuration of each payline.

20 However, many variations of arrays and paylines may also be used.

Any paylines carrying a bet and showing one of the predetermined winning combinations of symbols is a winning payline and credits are added to the player's credit meter (not shown).

The gaming machine and method of playing the machine includes a base game
25 of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, such that the machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any of the winning outcomes.

The gaming machine is adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes during the play of the base game. Once a player accumulates one or more predetermined
30 feature qualifying attributes, a window of opportunity opens allowing a player to

- 6 -

trigger the feature game at any time of their choosing whilst ever the window of opportunity remains open. The window of opportunity will remain open until the player no longer holds the predetermined feature qualifying attributes. Different types of feature qualifying attributes may be identified by corresponding feature qualifying
5 symbols.

The feature qualifying attributes may be accumulated in a variety of ways including at random, when the base game is played a predetermined number of times or on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations during play of the base game.

10 Once player has used some or all of their feature qualifying attributes to trigger the feature game, the spent attributes are subsequently removed from the player's tally. In other embodiments of the invention, the removal of the attributes may occur at random or on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination during play of the base game. Feature attributes may also be removed if the base
15 game is played a predetermined number of times.

When a player triggers the feature game, the characteristics of that game are dependent on the accumulation of specific feature qualifying attributes. For example accumulation of specific attributes may result in a feature game which provides free games, win multipliers, substitute symbols, bonus prizes, held reels, bonus reels,
20 bonus scatter symbols, bonus substitute symbols or bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.

There may also be varying levels of windows of opportunity in which higher levels may be perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.

In one embodiment, the feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot
25 qualifying attributes and the machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon accumulation of a predetermined number of jackpot qualifying attributes.

Preferably, player interaction is required to determine if the jackpot is won. Upon triggering the jackpot game, the machine is configured to provide a secondary

- 7 -

screen for facilitating the player interaction. The prize for the jackpot may be contributed by a standalone machine or a number of machines networked together.

In use, a player begins playing the base game and may be awarded feature qualifying attributes depending on the outcome the base game or the number of base
5 games played. The feature qualifying attributes may also be awarded at random.

Once a player has accumulated the required amount or type of feature qualifying attributes, a window of opportunity opens for the player to start the feature game. If the player does not wish to play the feature game at that time, they may continue playing the base game in the hope of accumulating more feature qualifying
10 attributes.

For example, a player may be awarded feature qualifying attributes which allow them to use a substitute symbol during play of the base game. If a player has recently won a large payout on a base game, they may not expect a winning combination to occur again for some time. Therefore in order to maximise their
15 chances of winning, they may wait a few turns before using the substitute symbol during play. Furthermore, a player may wait until they have accumulated a range of feature qualifying attributes which allow them to use features such as win multipliers or held reels and choose to use some or all of them at the one time, maximizing their chances of attaining a winning combination. Hence the invention allows the player
20 more options for their "gaming strategy".

When the player chooses to use some or all of the feature qualifying attributes to play the feature game, the spent attributes are removed from their tally. The machine may also remove some or all of the feature qualifying attributes during play of the base game. Once a player no longer has enough feature qualifying attributes to
25 play the feature game, the window of opportunity closes until the player accumulates the required number or type of attributes for the window to open again.

The present invention has been described herein by way of example only. Ordinary workers in this field will readily recognise many variations and modifications which do not depart from the spirit and scope of the broad inventive
30 concept.

- 8 -

CLAIMS:-

1. A gaming machine including:

a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any
5 of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

10 said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

2. A gaming machine according to claim 1 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

3. A gaming machine according to claim 1 or 2 wherein said feature qualifying
15 attributes are awarded at random.

4. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 2 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

5. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 2 wherein said feature
20 qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

6. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.

25 7. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.

- 9 -

8. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.
- 5 9. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.
10. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of
10 predetermined feature qualifying attributes.
11. A gaming machine according to claim 10 wherein said feature game includes free games.
12. A gaming machine according to claim 10 or claim 11 wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.
- 15 13. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 12 wherein said feature game includes substitute symbols.
14. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 13 wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.
15. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 14 wherein said feature
20 game includes held reels.
16. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 15 wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.
17. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 16 wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.
- 25 18. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 17 wherein said feature game includes bonus substitute symbols.

- 10 -

19. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 18 wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.

20. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein
5 varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.

21. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said
feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.

22. A gaming machine according to claim 21 wherein said machine is configured to
10 provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.

23. A gaming machine according to claim 22 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.

24. A gaming machine according to claim 23 wherein a jackpot screen will appear
15 for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.

25. A gaming machine according to claim 23 or claim 24 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.

26. A gaming machine according to claim 23 or claim 24 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.

20 27. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said base game is a spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.

28. A method of operating a gaming machine, the method including the steps of:
providing a base game of chance having random outcomes which include
25 predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a

- 11 -

window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

- 5 29. A method according to claim 28 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.
30. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded at random.
31. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying
10 attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.
32. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.
- 15 33. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.
34. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.
- 20 35. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.
36. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a
25 predetermined number of times.
37. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 36 wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

- 12 -

38. A method according to claim 37 wherein said feature game includes free games.
39. A method according to claim 37 or claim 38 wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.
40. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 39 wherein said feature game
5 includes substitute symbols.
41. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 40 wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.
42. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 41 wherein said feature game includes held reels.
- 10 43. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 42 wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.
44. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 43 wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.
45. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 44 wherein said feature game
15 includes bonus substitute symbols.
46. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 45 wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.
47. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 46 wherein varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player
20 as returning increased winnings.
48. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 47 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.
49. A method according to claim 48 wherein said machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of
25 one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.

- 13 -

50. A method according to claim 49 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.
51. A method according to claim 50 wherein a jackpot screen will appear for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.
- 5 52. A method according to claim 50 or claim 51 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.
53. A method according to claim 50 or claim 51 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.
54. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 53 wherein said base game is a
10 spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.

ABSTRACT

A gaming machine (1) including a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes. The machine is adapted to pay winnings upon the occurrence of any of the winning outcomes. The machine is
5 also adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst the window of opportunity is open. The window of opportunity remains open until the player no longer holds the one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

10

FIG. 1